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# South Boston

District Profile &  
Proposed 1978-1980  
Neighborhood  
Improvement  
Program

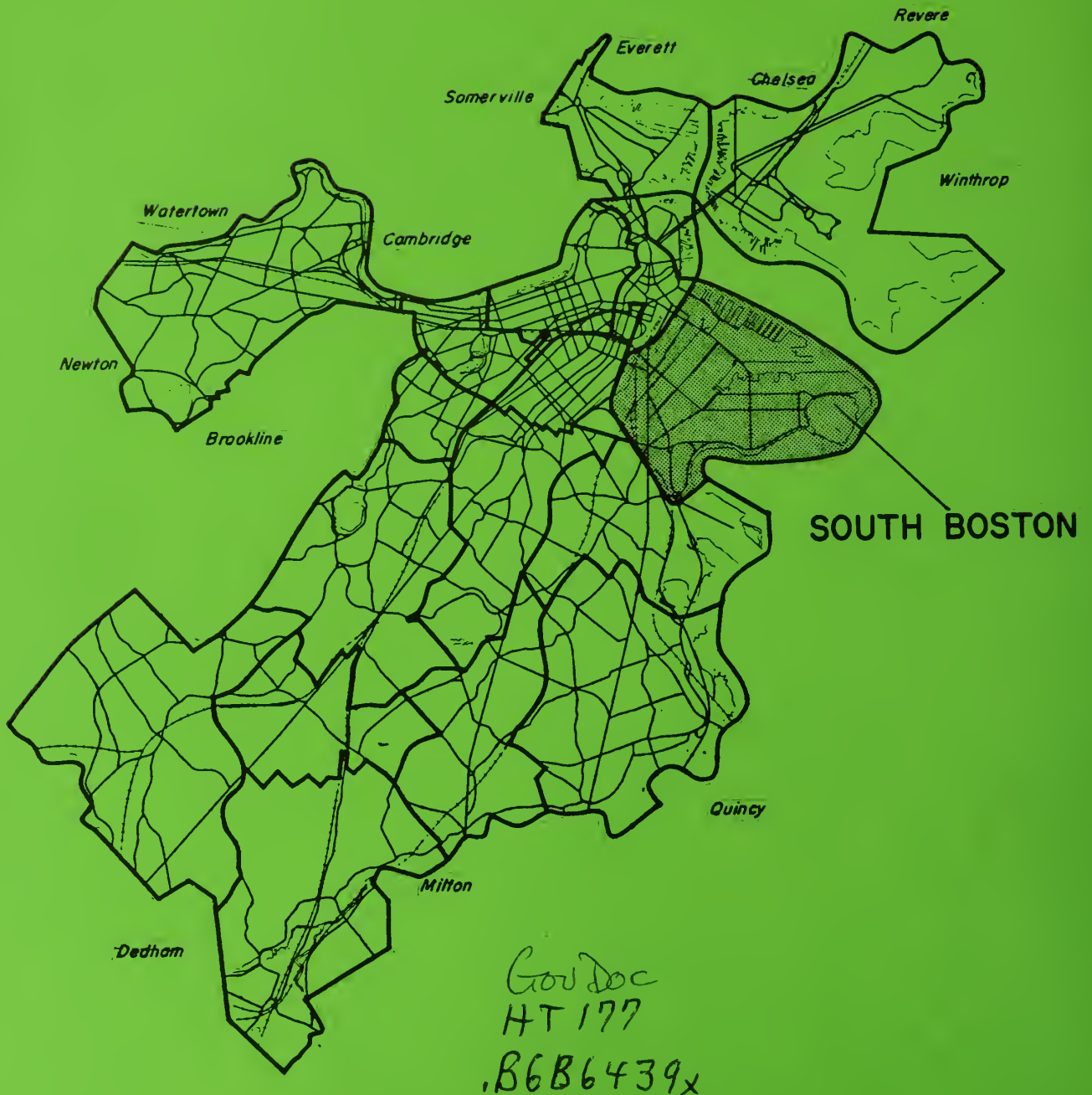
City of Boston  
Kevin H. White, Mayor  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
Neighborhood Planning Program  
Summer, 1977

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KEVIN H. WHITE  
MAYOR

CITY OF BOSTON  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY HALL, BOSTON

The Boston Redevelopment Authority's Neighborhood Planning Program has prepared this report to assist residents and City agencies develop longer range solutions to community-wide planning issues.

This "Neighborhood Profile" contains information which helps bring into sharp focus those matters which are of concern to residents of each neighborhood in the City. This information facilitates public understanding and assists all of us--both at City Hall and in the neighborhood--in determining how we can best use the resources available to us.

I hope this booklet serves as an important building block to encourage greater interest in the problems confronting this neighborhood and our City and help us all in developing solutions to these problems.

Kevin H. White  
Mayor

# Boston Redevelopment Authority

Robert F. Walsh / Director

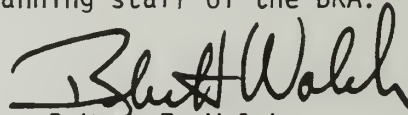
City Hall  
1 City Hall Square  
Boston, Massachusetts 02201  
Telephone (617) 722-4300

The Boston Redevelopment Authority, as the City planning agency, is pleased to submit for neighborhood review a profile of South Boston.

It is my hope that the profile can serve as a starting point in the dialogue that should and must take place between neighborhood residents and public officials as decisions are made about the use of community development funds and other matters of public policy.

The decision-making process, of course, must be based on data that is up-to-date and accurate. I am confident that the material contained in this report can be of great assistance to all who care about this neighborhood in particular and the city as a whole.

Questions and comments about the material in the report should be directed to the Neighborhood Planning staff of the BRA.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert F. Walsh", written in a cursive style.

Robert F. Walsh  
Director  
Boston Redevelopment Authority

This planning report, prepared by the South Boston Neighborhood Planner, is intended to assist local residents and City officials in defining the needs of, and programs for the South Boston area. It is also written to provide prospective residents and investors with an analysis of current issues facing the community.

The report includes background information, a discussion of major community planning and development issues and recommended strategies and is intended to assist in the establishment of a long-range framework for decision making by the public and private sectors.



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# 1. BACKGROUND

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## A. NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY

South Boston was founded in 1630 as a part of Dorchester and was annexed to Boston in 1804. At that time, South Boston was a peninsula of approximately 570 acres extending north from Dorchester, dominated by two prominent hills and separated from the Boston peninsula by South Boston Bay and the Dorchester Flats.

South Boston remained basically undeveloped until the early nineteenth century, when real estate speculators purchased land in the area, intending to develop it as a high income residential neighborhood. In 1805 the first bridge connecting South Boston to Boston Proper was constructed, and the district's characteristic grid street pattern was laid out. Development was rather slow at first, but a number of wealthy Yankee merchants built large wooden houses along East Broadway and around Thomas Park on Telegraph Hill.

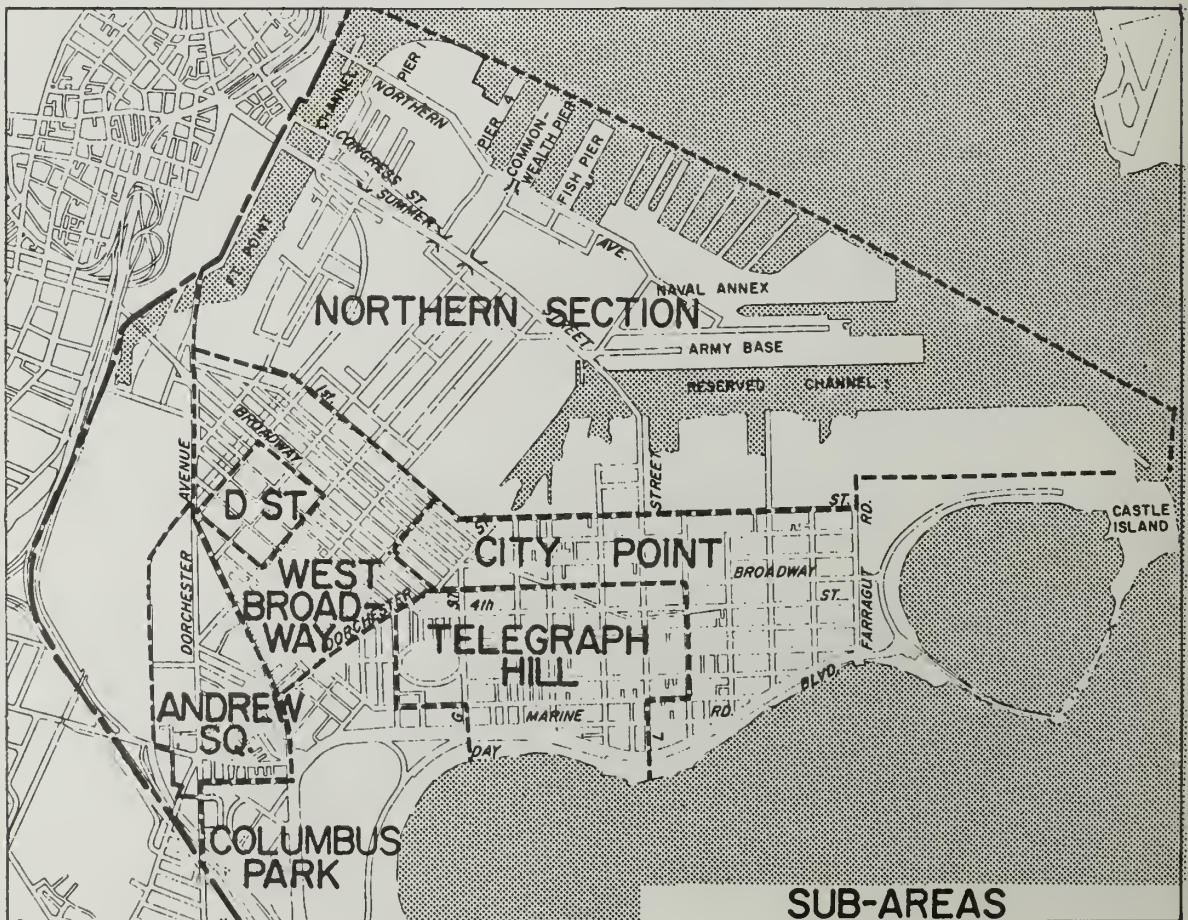
The pace of development accelerated in the 1830's as new bridges were opened and the northern marshland began to be filled for industrial development (see map). The region of South Bay became a center for the lumber and foundry industries. As more land was created and industrial development expanded, South Boston increasingly became the home of industrial workers and their families, most of whom were Irish immigrants. These laborers settled in the area west of Dorchester Street, in frame triple-decker houses.

The Great Boston fire in 1874 brought more immigrant laborers to the already crowded western section, and as Back Bay was established as Boston's fashionable residential district, South Boston lost its last attraction as a high income neighborhood. Much of the peninsula was developed during the 1870's and 1880's with simple wooden or brick row houses and detached three-family dwellings. The extension of streetcar service to the southern and eastern shores in 1890 led to the completion of the community's residential development. At the end of the nineteenth century other immigrant groups, Lithuanians, Poles and Italians, began to settle in the area west of Dorchester Street; and many of the Irish, already established in the community, crossed Dorchester Street to move into the eastern section.

The twentieth century has brought a steady increase of activity to the northern, non-residential section of South Boston. Industrial and warehousing operations have grown in size and number; and the railroad yards, once so vitally important, have fallen into disuse as trucking and containerized shipping have become primary means of transporting goods and materials. The growth of the industrial and warehousing operations was for the most part un-

planned and uncontrolled and resulted in a band of mixed residential and industrial land along the northern boundary of the South Boston residential neighborhood and a high incidence of truck traffic on residential streets.

South Boston lost almost a third of its population between 1950 and 1970, and recent years have brought an increasing turnover and change in the population of this formerly extremely stable community. Greatest population losses have occurred in the 1-9 years age category attributed somewhat to low national birth rates and in the northern residential sections most heavily affected by industrial encroachment and increasing truck traffic, which also are characterized by deteriorated and abandoned housing. The elderly population has increased in South Boston; apparently many former South Boston residents have returned to move into the two elderly housing projects built in the last fifteen years. The Boston Housing Authority has also built three low income housing projects in South Boston, the Old Harbor or Mary McCormack Project in 1938, the Old Colony Project in 1941, and the D Street Project in 1949. Although the majority of South Boston's population has been Irish since the early nineteenth century, this majority has been decreasing, while numbers of Eastern Europeans, French Canadians and Italians are growing. The neighborhood has continued its traditional character of a predominantly middle income neighborhood through the present day.





## B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

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Information on population and housing in this report was derived from the 1960 and 1970 U.S. Census. Seven sub-areas of South Boston have been designated for further analysis: City Point (1970 Census tracts 601, 602, and 605), Telegraph Hill (603 and 604), Columbus Park (610 and 611), Andrew Square (612 and 613), West Broadway (606, 608, 609 and 614), D Street (607), and the Northern Section.

### 1. City Point

City Point is located in the eastern section of South Boston and includes Independence Park, the Christopher Lee Playground, Marine Park, Pleasure Bay and Castle Island. A portion of the commercial center which serves the entire district is located along Broadway in City Point, and local neighborhood commercial establishments are scattered on corners of residential streets throughout the area. The Sea-Land containerport and other port activity occupy filled land north of Marine Park and Pleasure Bay, and several heavy industrial uses are located along First Street. Aside from the Lee Playground, there is no buffer or definite boundary separating industrial land from the residential neighborhood, and there is evidence of housing deterioration along the northern edge of the area.

There are some large single and two-family detached houses along East Broadway and in the vicinity of Marine Park and the waterfront; the remainder are either wooden triple-deckers or brick or frame row houses. Although most of the housing is in good or fair condition, 1,622 units or 38% of the neighborhood housing stock required over \$1,000 for fix-up in 1973. According to a City/BRA survey, more than 25% of the units in City Point were owner-occupied; in 1970, this figure is slightly greater than the district average. The majority of residential structures in the area contain three dwelling units, and most have resident owners. The degree of mobility in the area is surprisingly high, however, only 37.2% of the area's 1970 population had lived in the same house for five or more years, compared with the district-wide figure of 52.7% and 50% for the city as a whole. The area experienced a moderate 7.5% loss of population between 1960 and 1970. Categories of young adults and elderly increased slightly during the period, while there was a significant loss of over 21% in the population of children under 10. Incomes in City Point are higher than in most other areas of South Boston. The 1970 median family income for the area was \$8,663-10,183, with a relatively low percentage (18%) of the area's families earning less than \$5,000.

## 2. Telegraph Hill

Telegraph Hill is located south and west of City Point and is bounded by Broadway, Old Harbor Street, M Street, and the L Street Beach. Thomas Park and the South Boston High School atop Dorchester Heights are visually dominant features. The area also includes a portion of the district's commercial area along Broadway and scattered local neighborhood stores on street corners. Thomas Park is surrounded by single and two-family detached houses, some of the most architecturally notable buildings in the district. From this point the residential streets slope downward, lined with low-rise brick or frame row houses, with some frame triple-deckers near the L Street Beach. The majority of houses in the area are in good condition and the rest in fair condition. Fewer than a quarter of the dwelling units required fix-up exceeding \$1,000 in 1973. The area shows strong signs of residential stability, with almost 35% of its dwelling units owner-occupied and 61.5% of its population who have lived in the same house for five or more years. The area experienced a moderate 7.7% population loss between 1960 and 1970. It lost over 28% of its children under 10 and gained 3% in youth aged 10-19, while the elderly population increased almost 18%. Telegraph Hill has some of the highest incomes in South Boston; the median family income was \$10,496-11,207, and only 12.6% of the area's families had incomes under \$5,000 in 1970.

## 3. Columbus Park

Columbus Park is in the southern section of South Boston, west of Telegraph Hill and bounded by Old Harbor Street, Dorchester Street, Old Colony Avenue, William Devine Way, Dorchester Avenue, the Expressway, and Carson Beach. Carson Beach and Columbus Park itself, a large active recreation field, are dominant features of the area. The neighborhood includes two housing projects, the Mary McCormack (Old Harbor) and the Old Colony housing projects, and a relatively small amount of private housing. The McCormack housing project, one of the oldest in the U.S., is stable, well-maintained, and has a good deal of grass and open space. Some of the long-time residents have added screens to their porches at their own expense. The design of the project, which is quite pleasant, includes 2-4 family and a few single family brick structures. The Old Colony is neither as well-designed nor as pleasant but is fairly well-maintained. Most of the area's private houses are frame triple-deckers. The majority are in fair condition, and the rest are in good condition. The stability of the area is demonstrated by the fact that over 64% of its residents have lived in the same house for five or more years. Columbus Park lost 30% of its population between 1960 and 1970. Greatest losses occurred in

categories of young children and adults, while the elderly population increased over 61% in the same period. The area's median family income is low (\$6,319-6,659), and about 41% of the families in the area have incomes under \$5,000.

#### 4. Andrew Square

Andrew Square is situated north and west of Columbus Park and is bounded by Dorchester Avenue, Old Colony Avenue and William Devine Way. It has a small commercial center, which is a mixture of stores which serve the local neighborhood and stores which serve and supply other businesses and industries. Over the years, the closing of the John Andrew School, St. Paul's Religious Book Store and the razing of a building which housed a restaurant and upholstery business and the recent closing of a gas station have had a noticeable visual and economic effect on this center. An MBTA transit station is also located in this center. The dominant housing type is the frame triple-decker, complemented by some single and two-family houses. The majority of the area's housing stock is in fair condition, with some structures in poor condition and others in good condition. Recently, several fires, all of suspicious origin, have caused great concern for homeowners in this area. An estimated 484 units (over half of the neighborhood's total) required fix-up costing over \$1,000 in 1973. Approximately one fourth of the area's dwelling units are owner-occupied and about 62% of the area's residents have lived in the same house for five or more years. Two kinds of conversions have been taking place in the area, one, from two-family houses to single family dwellings, and two, from large flats to smaller apartments. These conversions are evidence of an increasing and changing demand for housing in the area, which may be generated in part by the new campus of the University of Massachusetts at nearby Columbia Point and due to national/ regional trends toward smaller families. Andrew Square's population increased slightly by 3.4% between 1960 and 1970. There were gains in all age categories except 1-9 years, which decreased 18.5%. The area experienced a great increase of 30.5% in the elderly category. The area's median family income in 1970 was \$7,000-\$8,000, and almost 30% of its families earned less than \$5,000.

#### 5. West Broadway/Lower End

West Broadway is located in the western section of South Boston and northeast of Andrew Square. It surrounds the D Street housing project and is bounded roughly by West First Street, Dorchester Avenue, Old Colony Avenue, Dorchester Street, West Broadway and F Street. The area includes a major portion of South Boston's central business district, which runs along Broadway. A number of industrial establishments and commercial warehouses are located along West



First and West Second Streets and in the northwestern corner of the area. The lack of a definite boundary or buffer to separate the residential neighborhood from these uses has resulted in a section of mixed use along the northern edge of the area. Heavy truck traffic generated by these warehouses and industries creates a safety hazard, pollution and congestion on residential streets. The rowhouse, of either brick or wooden frame, is the dominant housing type in the area. Although the bulk of residential structures are in fair condition, many are in poor condition and few are in good condition. A total of 1,125 units, over half of the neighborhood's housing stock, required fix-up in excess of \$1,000 in 1973. During this past winter (1976-1977) this area has been the scene of numerous fires, some of suspicious origin, forcing at least ten families to seek alternative housing. Some of the fires were of suspicious origin. Recent housing studies have shown that there has been occasional investment, but also the highest rate of housing abandonment, deterioration and vacant lots in South Boston. The vacant lots are hazardous and unsightly dumping areas for debris or wrecked cars while the abandoned buildings are potential fire hazards to the community. The cost of rehabilitating most of the housing in the area is beyond the means of landlords, and the rent they would have to charge to cover improvement costs would be beyond the means of their tenants without help from subsidies. About 28% of the area's housing units are owner-occupied, and about 53% of the area's residents have lived in the same house for five or more years. The West Broadway area lost over a fourth of its population between 1960 and 1970, with heavy losses in all age categories. The area's median family income in 1970 (\$7,100-9,316) was moderate, and close to 25% of the area's families earn less than \$5,000. There is a good deal of shuffling of population between the D Street project and the immediately adjacent parts of the West Broadway neighborhood. Generally, this section is undergoing rapid transition from a stable to a rapidly declining neighborhood, being blighted by both the D Street housing project and surrounding industry, which continues to encroach on the residential neighborhood.

#### 6. "D" Street Project Area

D Street is located within the West Broadway area and is bounded by B Street, D Street, West Broadway and West Seventh Street. This state-owned, but city maintained, housing project has, over the last two years, been plagued by fires, crime, vandalism and destruction of vacant units, and is in dire need of upgrading. The new Condon Community School, located within the project, with its indoor-outdoor recreational facilities and community programs offers

various activities to project and area residents; but the overall condition of the "D" Street project desperately needs massive public funds for revitalization. "D" Street experienced a net population loss of 5% between 1960 and 1970. The area lost almost 24% of its young childhood population and close to 30% of its young adults. During the same period, the area gained almost 30% in the 10-19 age category and experienced more moderate gains in adult and elderly population. The median family income in 1970 was low, \$4,590, and over 60% of the families in D Street earned less than \$5,000. The project is adversely affected by nearby industrial development and truck traffic and, in turn, its condition adversely affects any kind of private investment in the area, residential, commercial or industrial.

## 7. Northern Section

The northern section of South Boston is a large, non-residential expanse of over 900 acres of filled land extending northward from East and West First Street to the Fort Point Channel and Boston Harbor. Land in the northern section is used primarily for industrial, warehousing and distribution, institutional and commercial purposes.

Currently, development is of relatively low density, with large areas of vacant and underutilized land, much of which has resulted from the 1973 closing of the South Boston Naval Annex. The Northern Section is distinct from the rest of South Boston in terms of land use and density, but the East/West First Street truck route which divides them is not a definite boundary and non-residential uses are mixed into residential neighborhoods. The Summer Street, Congress Street and Northern Avenue bridges over Fort Point Channel provide access to the Northern Section from downtown Boston and points farther north. Access from the south is less direct, and many trucks use residential streets to get into this area. The great amount of under-developed land in the area, almost 300 acres in close proximity to downtown and the construction activity across the Fort Point Channel in the South Station vicinity, is creating development pressure in the Northern Section. The vast majority of land in the Northern Section is in the ownership of three private corporations, Athanas-Anthony's Pier Four, Town & Cities, Gillette, Massachusetts Port Authority, and the United States Government. Two major commercial and residential developments have begun to be planned by private investors for land near the Fort Point Channel. The City's E.D.I.C. and Massport are currently negotiating over the development of the 1973 surplus General Services Administration property, the South Boston Naval Annex and Army Base for roll-on roll-off containers and storage areas and other industrial uses. A portion of the South Boston Naval Annex has already been developed by the City's Economic Development Industrial Commission for industrial reuse.



#### THE FILLED-IN AREAS OF BOSTON

Boston has greatly increased its area by filling bays, coves, and inlets. The original area is usually given as 783 acres. The filled-in lands add between three and four times that amount. Dates and amounts given below are approximate only as records do not agree, having been made at different times and by different men, and in certain localities filling-in is still in process. The figures are the best available and the numbered paragraphs refer to sections indicated on the accompanying map.

1. South Bay, amount about 138 acres, begun in 1850, not yet completed.
- ② South Boston, amount about 714 acres, begun in 1836, still in process.
3. Marine Park, acquired in 1883, about 57 acres; bridge to Castle Island, July 1, 1891, included in South Boston filling.
4. Columbus Park with Strandway, amount about 265 acres, acquired, 1890-1901; part of South Boston filling, as given above.



Comparative Statistics - South Boston  
1970 U.S. Census Data

Population	City Point (601,602 605)	Telegraph Hill (603,604)	Columbus Park (610,611)	Andrew Square (612,613)	West Broadway (606,608, 609,614)	O Street (607)	South Boston District	City of Boston
Total 1970	11,378	10,144	5,750	2,222	5,455	3,539	38,488	641,071
% Change from '60	- 7.5%	- 7.7%	-30.0%	+ 3.4%	-26.4%	- 5.0%	-10.4%	- 8.1%
Aged 0-9 yrs. - 1970	1,822	1,406	1,111	325	842	1,062	6,568	101,634
% Change from '60	-21.3%	-28.3%	-35.2%	-18.5%	-39.2%	-23.9%	-28.4%	-15.8%
Aged 10-19 yrs. - 1970	1,812	1,709	1,130	385	1,043	933	7,012	112,122
% Change from '60	- 5.6%	+ 3.0%	-12.3%	+ 7.5%	-18.7%	+29.9%	- 3.0%	+ 9.2%
Aged 20-34 yrs. - 1970	2,349	1,800	870	372	917	456	6,764	156,497
% Change from '60	+ 2.1%	-10.0%	-32.2%	+ 8.8%	-30.3%	-29.6%	-14.3%	+ 9.2%
Aged 35-64 yrs. - 1970	3,959	3,586	1,590	819	1,930	799	12,683	189,059
% Change from '60	- 9.7%	- 9.7%	-27.2%	+ 1.9%	-24.7%	+17.2%	-13.1%	-22.8%
Aged 65 yrs. & over 1970	1,436	1,643	1,049	321	723	289	5,461	81,759
% Change from '60	+ 4.1%	+17.7%	+16.4%	+30.5%	-16.7%	- 2.1%	+ 7.7%	- 4.5%
<u>Income</u>								
Median Family	\$ 8,663- 10,183	\$10,496- 11,207	\$ 6,319- 6,659	\$ 7,558- 7,694	\$ 7,100- 9,316	\$- 4,590	\$ 4,590- 11,207	\$ 9,133
% Families under \$5,000	18.0%	12.6%	41.1%	29.2%	24.5%	57.1%	24.9%	21.8%
<u>Housing</u>								
Total Dwelling Units	4,216	3,554	2,248	913	2,235	1,091	14,257	232,856
Units Needing Fix-Up in excess of \$1,000	1,622	817	361	484	1,125	1,091	5,500	67,102
%Owner Occupied Units	27.0%	34.8%	7.8%	24.2%	28.3%	0	23.9%	27.0%
Market Condition	Strong	Stable	Stable	Moderate	Weak	N/A	Stable	Stable
Mobility of Residents- Residence over 5 Years	37.2%	61.5%	64.3%	62.0%	53.1%	53.3%	52.7%	50%
<u>Unemployment</u>								
1970	-	-	-	-	-	-	5.0%	4.3%
1975	-	-	-	-	-	-	15.6%	12.7%
1977	-	-	-	-	-	-	11.0%	12.0%

### PAST MAJOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT (1968-1976)

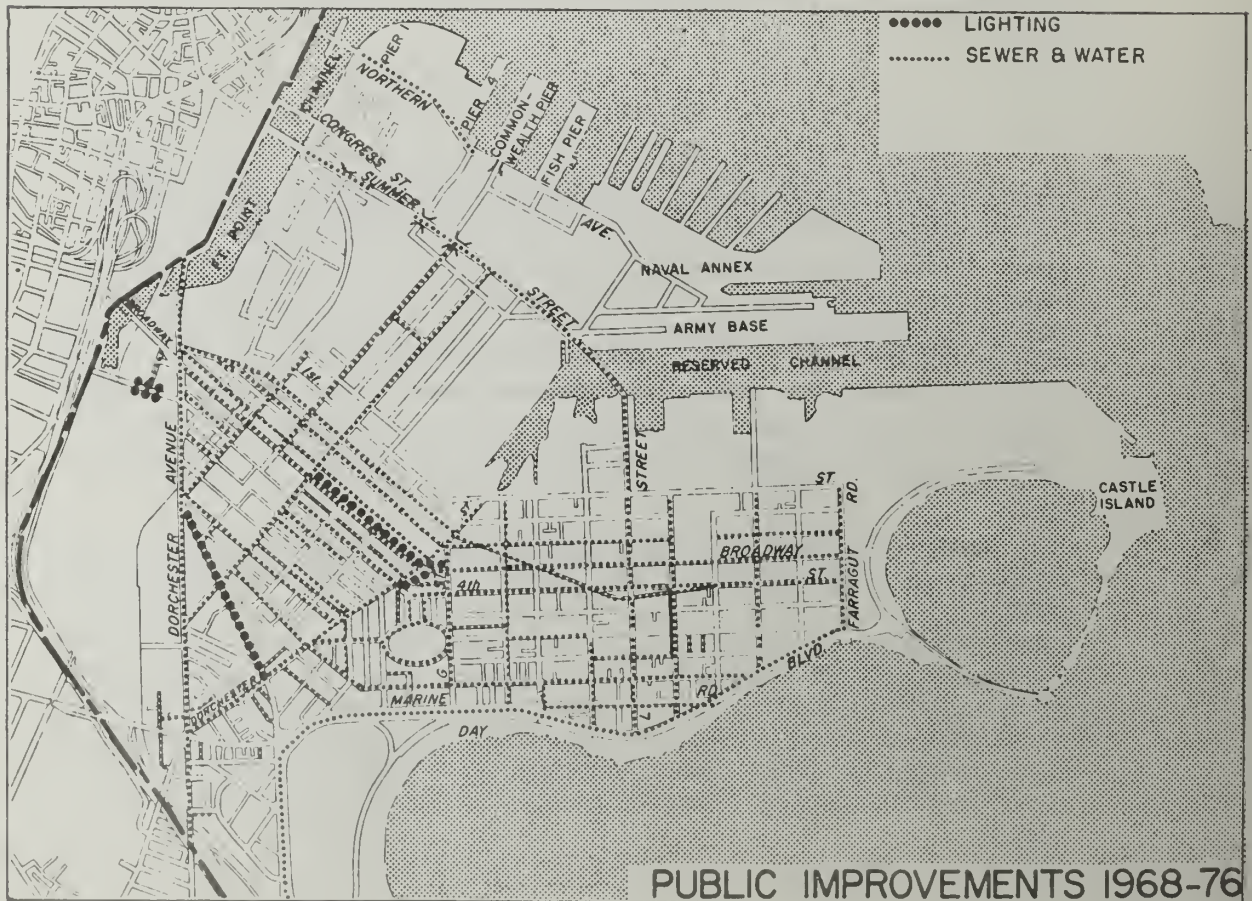
Capital expenditures in South Boston using City bond money, federal revenue sharing and public works funds have increased markedly over the last few years for public works and improvement of public facilities, parks and recreation facilities. Over \$4 million was spent between 1968-1976 on street and sidewalk improvements, replacement of sewer and water lines and installation of street lights. On Old Colony Avenue \$1,000,000 was spent between B Street and Preble Street as shown on the maps below.

The construction of the Federally subsidized Bay Towers housing development (152 units), three units of BHA leased housing and \$500,000 for the Housing Improvement Program (see 1977 investment program below for a brief explanation of H.I.P.) represent the major public investment in housing. The City invested over \$1.5 million to rehabilitate the L Street Bath House-High School Annex which was recently returned to the South Boston community for recreational use. Approximately \$5 million was spent on construction of the new Tynan Community School, gymnasium and pool.

Over \$1 million was spent on improvements to parks and recreational facilities, including the B Street-West Third Playground, Columbus Park, Lee Playground, Father Buckley and Thomas Park, L Street Bathing Beach and the Sweeney Play Area.

The most recent public improvements include: the reconstruction of the Northern Avenue Bridge and two of the Summer Street Bridges which are constantly subjected to heavy truck traffic; construction of a \$700,000, 61-space parking lot on West Broadway which has effectively reduced double and triple parking in the business district, \$1.1 million for the construction of the D Street fire station, \$9 million for the Condon Community School, pool and gymnasium, and \$1,800,000 for the state-funded Peninsular Arms, 68 units of elderly housing (nearing completion) on "L" and E. 5th Streets.

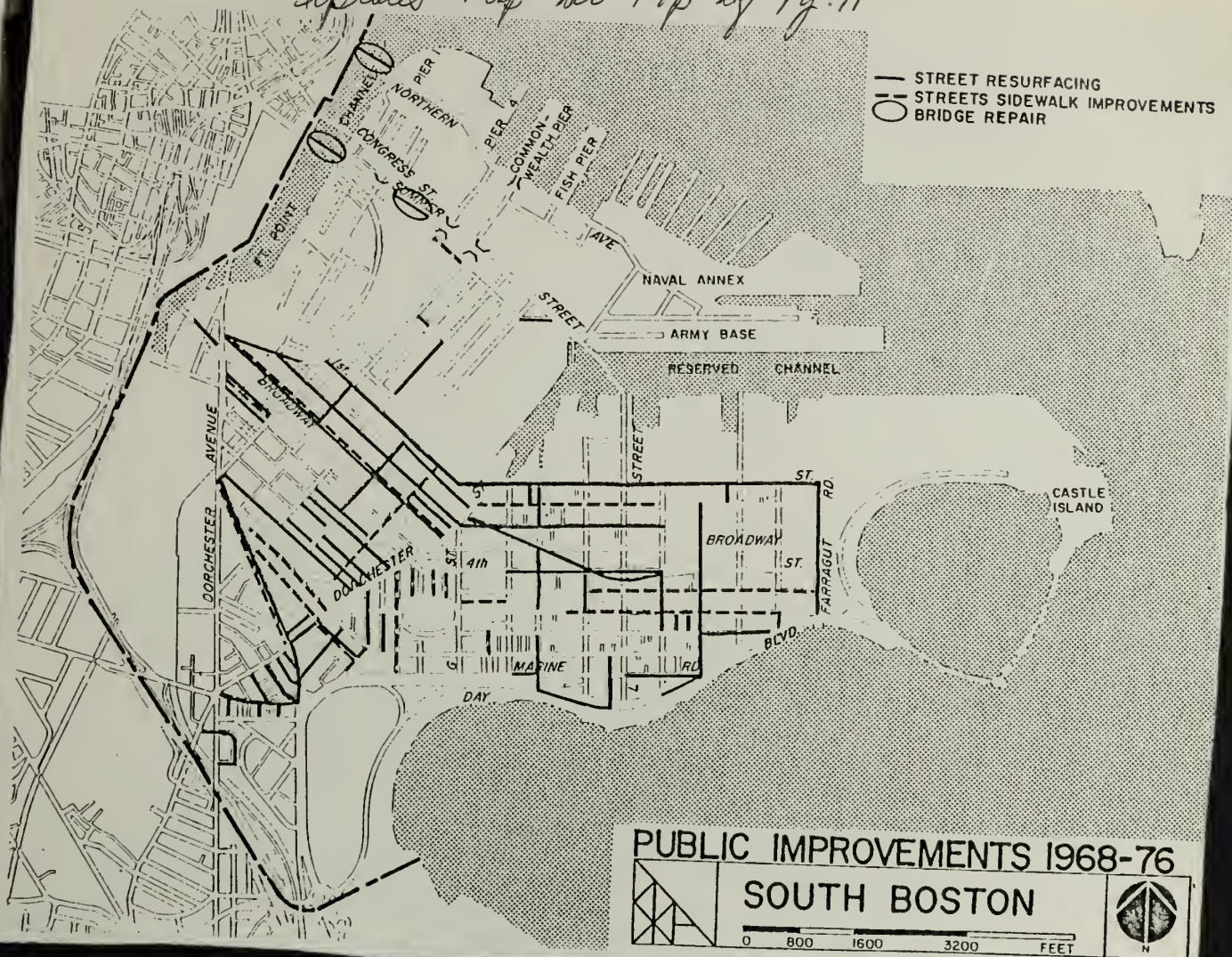
Federal revenue sharing funds totalling \$125,000 were matched by Massport to pay for the required design and environmental review study of the "Seaport Access Road." This study, expected to be completed in late Fall of 1977, will evaluate possible route alternatives to provide adequate access for trucks to the northern industrial area while alleviating truck traffic and noise in the southern or residential areas of South Boston. This access road is the key link in developing a major portion of approximate 300 acres of vacant and underutilized land in the northern industrial sector.





*Replaces Map at Top of Pg. 11*

- STREET RESURFACING
- STREETS SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS
- BRIDGE REPAIR



PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS 1968-76

SOUTH BOSTON

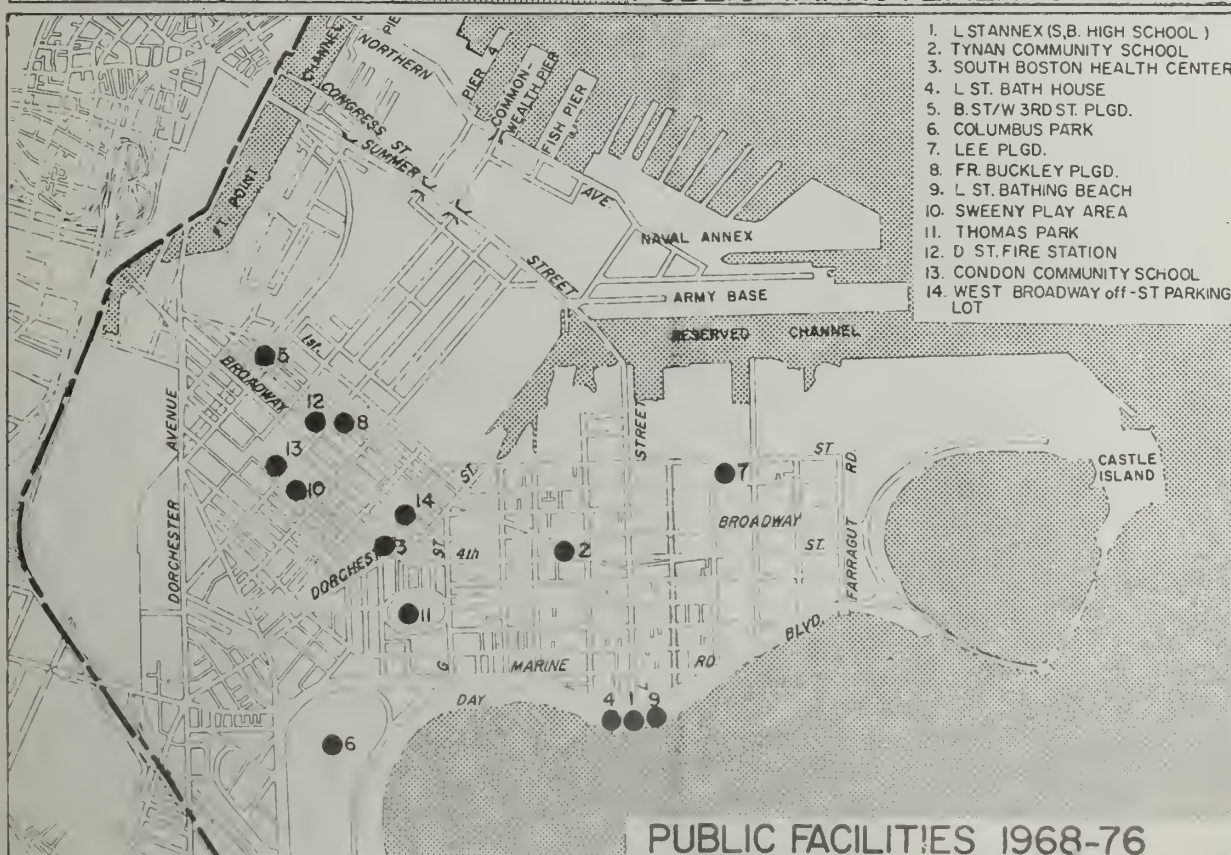
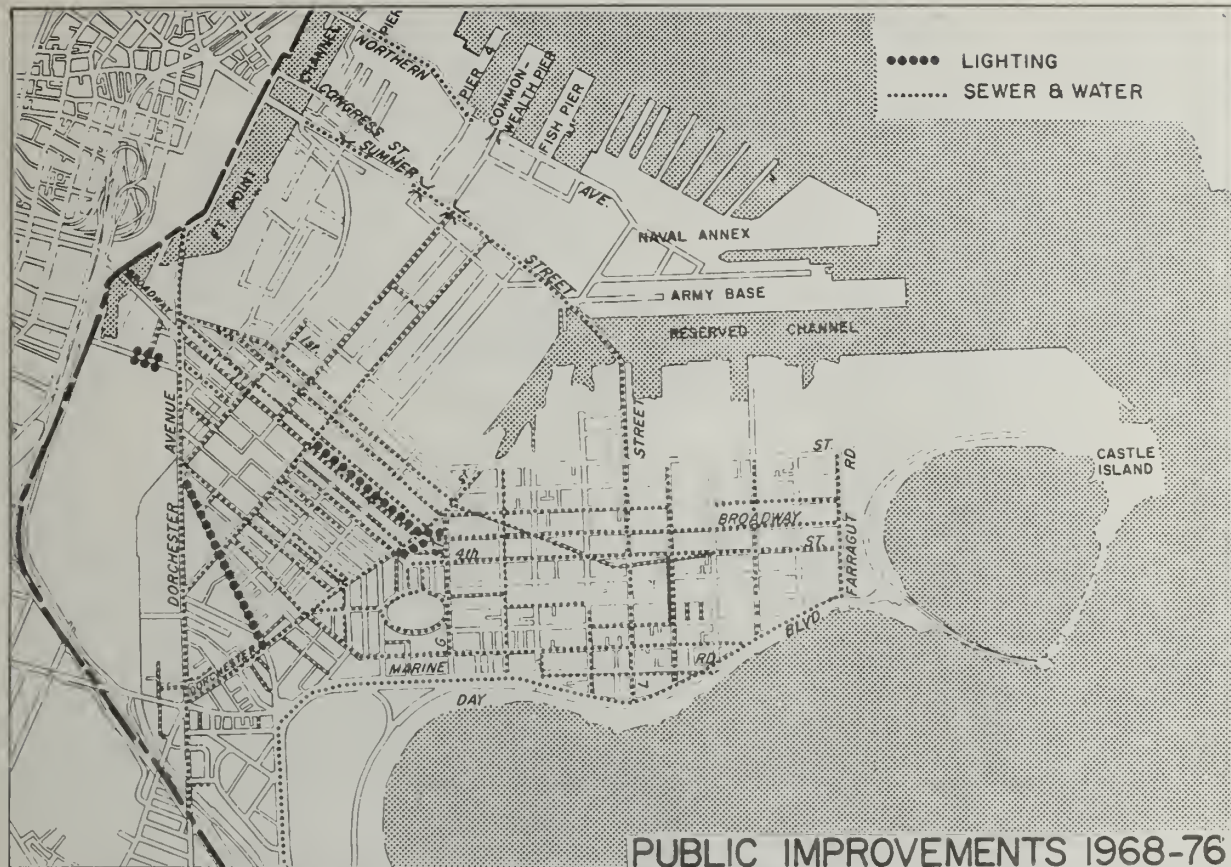


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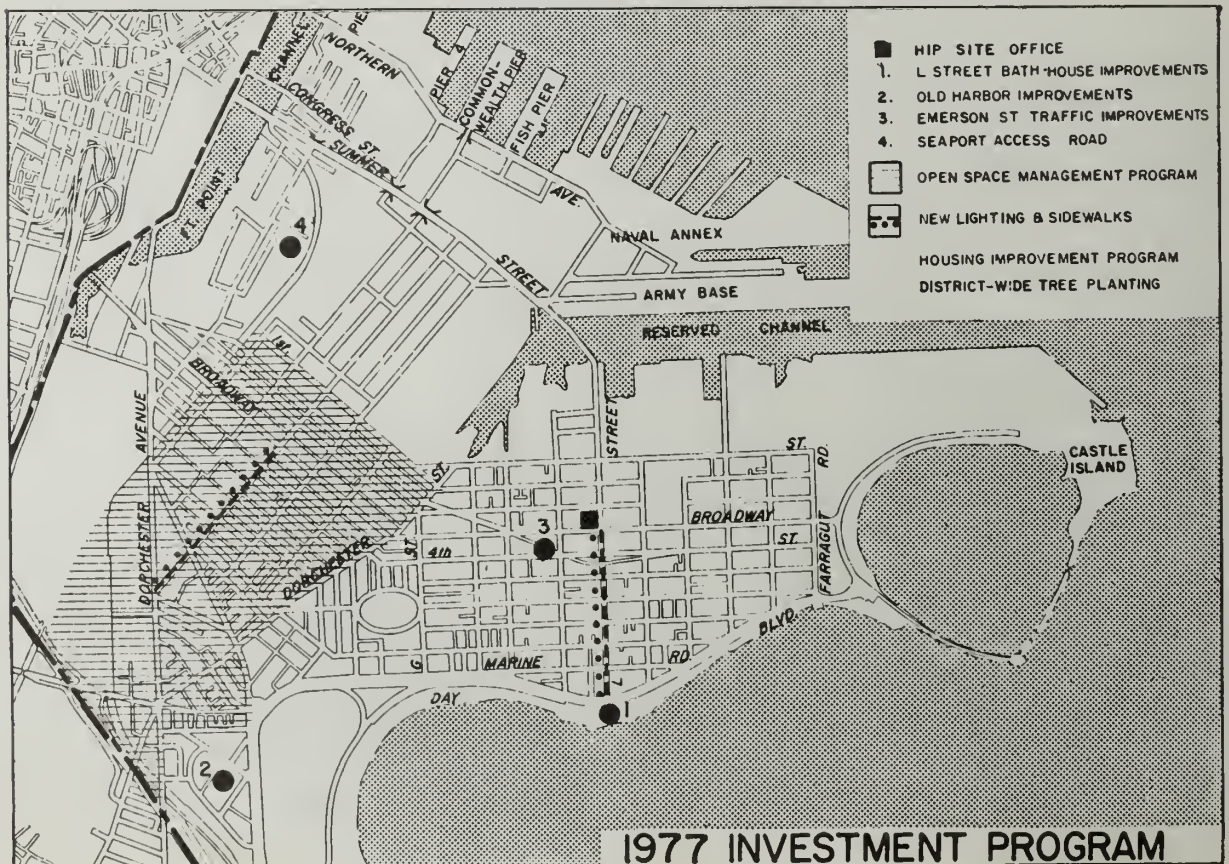
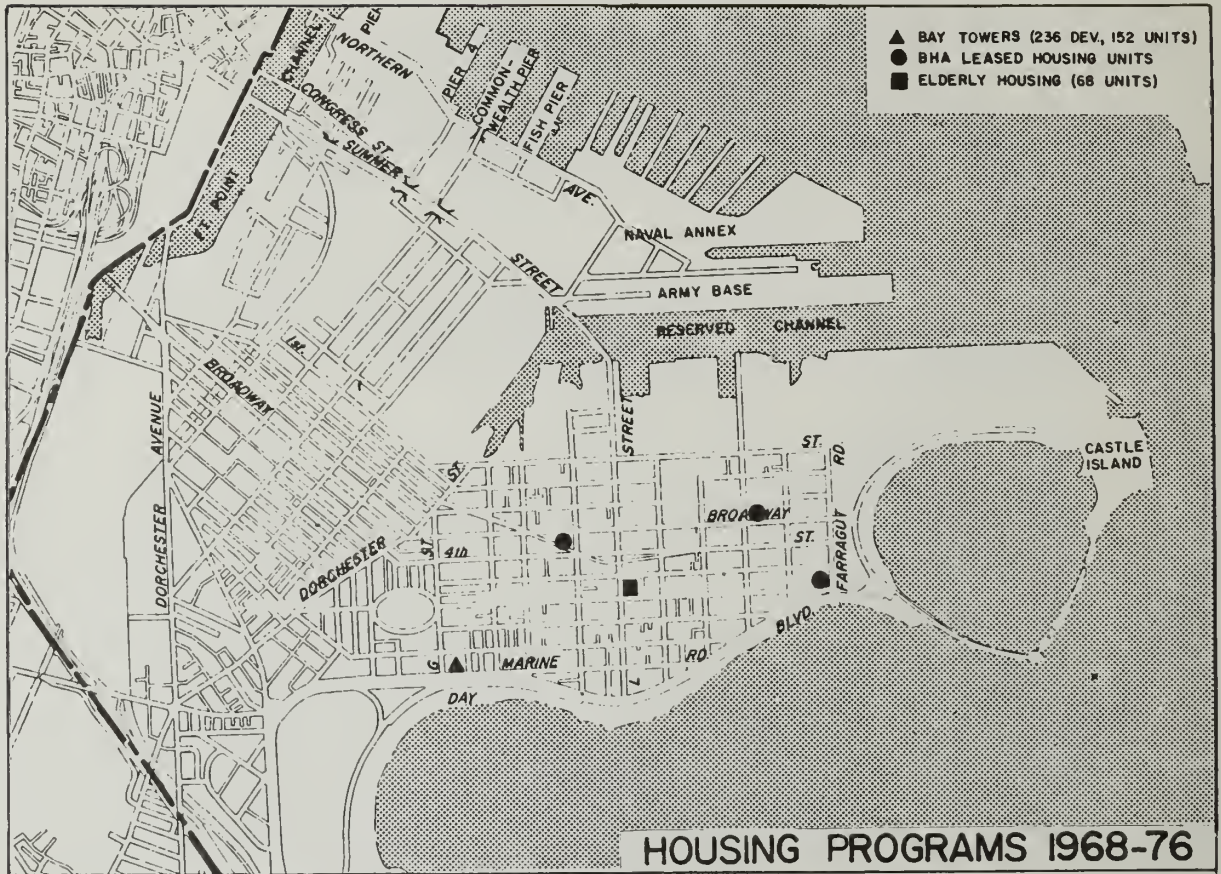














The 1977 program for South Boston includes investment in housing, the business districts, an "Open Space Management" program, public facilities, parks and recreational facilities, public works and traffic improvements. A central element of the housing investment program is the Housing Improvement Program (HIP) which provides rehabilitation incentive through rebates to resident-owners of buildings with 1-6 dwelling units. Financial counseling is also available as well as no reassessments on repairs made under the program. A total of \$160,000 will be available to the HIP 20% rebate program, \$40,000 to a targeted 40% area (see map) for high cost major repairs, and a new 50% rebate program for the elderly homeowners (\$50,000) throughout the area.

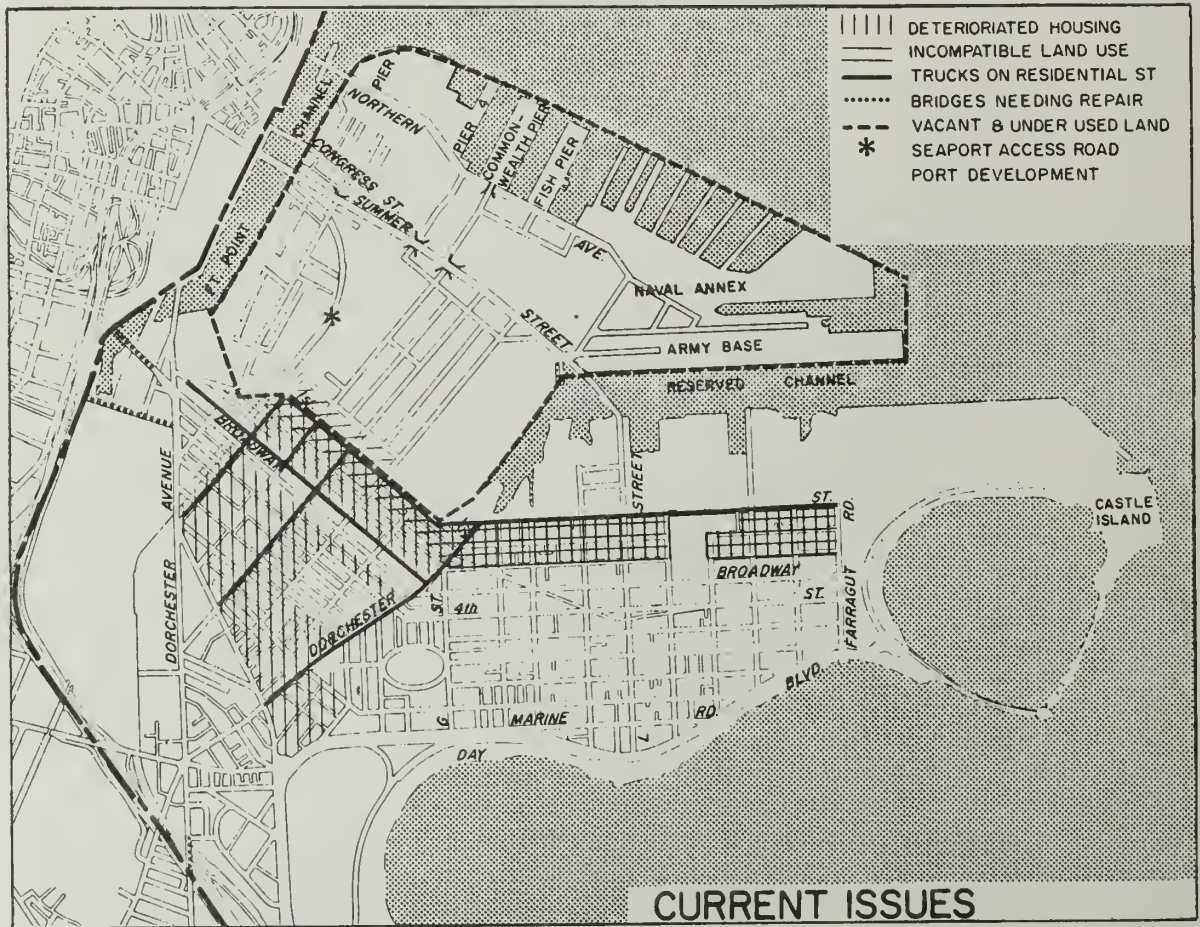
It is expected that in the third year of the HIP program, over 300 eligible homeowners will receive grants under the 20% program for general repairs, the 40% program for more intensive repairs, and the 50% program for elderly (over 65) homeowners. Last year, the average rebate grant to South Boston homeowners was \$600 and the average value of rehabilitation by a homeowner was \$3,000. The 1977 rebate and rehabilitation cost figures are expected to be similar. The site office for the administration of this program is located at 746 West Broadway. Funds have been allocated for boarding abandoned structures (\$30,000) and demolition (\$40,000) for about 20 hazardous buildings. The City allocated \$20,000 to the Revival Program for improvements to vacant lots abutting residences to be used for parking or Victory Gardens. Little City Hall has information about this program. Public housing improvements will include \$250,000 for upgrading the electrical system at the Mary E. McCormack Project.

The City's new Open Space Management Program has been designed for clearance and maintenance of vacant lots which are major eyesores throughout major problem areas in the City. A total of \$50,000 has been allocated for this program. Once the debris - strewn areas - are cleaned, other City programs such as Revival can be effectively utilized to reduce these eyesores.

The Storefront Improvement Program or "Restore", a spin-off of HIP, offers storeowners in targeted business areas such as West Broadway, 20% rebates on storefront and some interior improvements. The 1977 allotment for this program is \$20,000 and design assistance is available through the City's Neighborhood Business District Program. Call the Little City Hall for information.

Public works improvements for 1977 include: lights and sidewalks to be installed on both "D" (\$108,000) and "L" (\$216,000) Streets, nearing completion; an \$80,000 allocation for repair and renovation of the "L" Street Bathhouse and 350-400 trees to be planted in the business districts and throughout the community. In addition, \$25,000 has been allocated for the installation of new traffic lights and realignment of Emerson Street for improved traffic circulation at East Broadway have been funded for 1977.

The Seaport Access Road, which is now in the preliminary design and Environmental Impact Review stage, should, upon completion, provide adequate access for trucks to the industrial and warehousing operations in the northern section while alleviating truck traffic and noise on the residential streets of South Boston. In 1977, \$125,000 in CDBG funds will be used to pay part of the costs of a required design and environmental review study due for completion in late Fall of this year. If approved, construction could be completed in four to five years, depending on the route selected.





## 2. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES/RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES (Mid- and Long-Range)

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The most important planning goal for South Boston is to protect and improve the 14,000 homes and apartments in which the people of the community live today. Recent experience and economic projections agree -- for the foreseeable future, any new, privately financed housing built without subsidies in South Boston will be beyond the economic reach of all but a small percentage of South Boston residents. In other words, each house that burns, each apartment vandalized beyond repair, each building allowed to fall apart, will mean fewer housing opportunities for present and future South Boston residents.

Protecting and maintaining this valuable stock of housing is not a job that either the City or any other governmental unit can handle by itself. Housing belongs to, is used and abused, by people. That is not to say that the government has no responsibility for housing conditions. Every City activity from assessing to zoning affects the condition of the housing stock. State policies (such as maintenance of public housing projects and requiring banks to disclose the location of their loans) and the Federal government are involved as well.

There are four major, interrelated planning and development issues:

- (1) Residential Stability
- (2) Indirect Access to Industrial Operations and Related Transportation Problems
- (3) Incompatible Land Use
- (4) Vacant and Underutilized Land

These issues are described separately for the purpose of clarity in presenting strategies and investment needs. They are all, however, related to the critical issue of the stability of the South Boston residential neighborhood.

### A. RESIDENTIAL STABILITY

#### Issue

South Boston has long been one of the City's most stable residential neighborhoods with a strong sense of community rooted in the district's physical separation from the rest of the City, its fine parks and beaches, and its long traditions. During the last twenty years, however, there has been turn-over and change in population, and the community's stability has begun to show signs of erosion. The district's population has been decreasing. Families with young children have been moving out of the neighborhood in large numbers and the remaining population is growing older. Over 90% of South Boston's housing stock was built before 1939, most of it much earlier. Many of these older houses, even ones which have been well-maintained on a regular basis, require some major

reinvestment now and present special maintenance problems for residents. At the same time, costs of rehabilitation and maintenance have risen so high that in order to afford to make necessary repairs, owners would have to raise their rents and existing tenants might be forced out. Home improvement loans are difficult to obtain in those areas where new investment is most needed.

The lack of a definite boundary and buffer to separate industrial and residential uses has created special problems along the northern edge of the community. A band of mixed uses has existed for years along First and Second Streets in both the eastern and western sections of the district. These areas suffer the impact of heavy truck traffic generated by industrial uses and exhibit signs of housing deterioration and even some abandonment.

The West Broadway area has additional problems. This area is affected not only by industrial encroachment and truck traffic on residential streets, but also by the deteriorated "D" Street housing project. Evidence of housing deterioration and abandonment are frequent in this area and Andrew Square. Some abandoned buildings are in extremely bad condition and susceptible to vandalism and fires, which in turn threaten other houses in the vicinity.

The many vacant lots in the area, filled with debris or wrecked cars, are safety hazards and highly visible symbols of neglect, which discourage reinvestment. Housing in the area has been steadily deteriorating because of overcrowding and frequent turnover of residents whose low incomes have prevented them from making the necessary repairs to their property.

### Strategy

A continuous concentrated program of public investment is required to stimulate private investment in residential South Boston and restore the neighborhood's stability. The Housing Improvement Program, which offers a cash rebate incentive and technical assistance to resident owners wishing to rehabilitate their property, is the first step in preserving the housing stock of South Boston. This program has worked well in those areas where housing is basically sound and incomes are high enough to afford the required investment.

In other areas, however, notably West Broadway, where housing deterioration is pronounced, incomes are low and home improvement loans are difficult to obtain, more extensive rehabilitation assistance is necessary. A special H.I.P. program offering higher (40%) rebates for high cost repairs such as roof and furnace work became available in 1976 but industrial encroachment, housing stock age and the "D"

Street project all discourage housing improvements and have severely limited the success of this program. A more effective advertising approach to make residents aware of this program is needed.

It is increasingly apparent that a new public policy must be formulated to address the problems in the "D" Street project since it is having a detrimental effect on surrounding properties. The City should evaluate various measures which could improve the project. However, the availability of funds has restricted the BHA's ability to make project improvements.

In Andrew Square new uses, such as plans for elderly housing on the Andrew School or Amtrak's medium repair facility off Southampton Street, if they materialize would provide new jobs and a renewed vitality to Andrew Square, but more important, would spur housing rehabilitation through HIP and private sources.

Capital investments in public facilities, public works, and parks and recreation facilities funded in 1977 should help to restore resident confidence and stimulate private investment. Additional capital expenditures are necessary including residential street improvements, street lights, tree planting, and development of new open space and recreational facilities throughout South Boston but specifically in the impacted "Lower End" which over the years has been adversely affected by industrial encroachment, deteriorated housing and the "D" Street project.

A citywide program which addresses unemployment through job training and educational reform must focus on South Boston as an important priority. As of April, South Boston's unemployment rate was 12% - the same as the City average. The Job Training Center to be located within BMIP should have a positive effect on the unemployment rate.

Zoning and the policy for granting variances and conditional use requests should be reviewed and modified as necessary in order to control land-use mix and building conversions in the future. The City should continue to meet with local banks and lending institutions to ensure the availability of mortgage and home improvement money and stimulate investment in the community. By identifying housing needs, funding programs and suitable development sites, the City can encourage appropriate new residential development in South Boston.

B. INDIRECT ACCESS TO INDUSTRIAL OPERATIONS  
AND RELATED TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

Issue

Because of inadequate access to the industrial and warehousing operations in the northern section of South Boston, trucks have been using residential streets for years. The First Street truck route was originally established to address the problem but has been successful to only a limited degree. Traffic on the truck route itself is frequently held up by trucks which are double parked or unloading or negotiating sharp corners. Enforcing the existing truck route and preventing trucks from using other streets has been a problem; but even if truck traffic could be confined to using the truck route, trucks would still be using B and C Streets, which are primarily local streets themselves.

The East/West truck route, furthermore, does little to accommodate the need for trucks to travel north and south. Truck traffic moving between the northern section and the Turnpike or the Southeast Expressway currently travels through the western part of the residential neighborhood. This is the existing truck traffic problem. Over the past few years, a few fatalities have been attributed to truck traffic on residential streets. However, this situation will become exacerbated upon completion of the proposed development of the former South Boston Naval Annex, now Boston Marine Industrial Park, and the former Boston Army Base for a Free Trade Zone, expanded containerport and other light industrial uses. In ten years, it is estimated that 2.5 times as many trucks as are currently using South Boston's streets will be heading for this industrial area. This does not include the development of the vacant Penn Central properties and other private interests who over the years have expressed interest in fully developing their properties.

Strategy

In 1975, South Boston residents requested a study, the Seaport Access Road Study, to evaluate possible alternatives that would remove truck traffic and its related problems from the community's residential streets. In 1976, \$125,00 of federal revenue sharing (CDBG) funds, matched by the co-sponsor, MassPort, was allocated by the City for an Environmental Impact Study which allows for community input in the route selection. It is expected that with the cooperation and expertise of the citizens and their knowledge of their community, a suitable alternative will be chosen. The selected route will not only benefit the South Boston com-



munity with reduced truck traffic and the return of residential atmosphere, serve existing and anticipated future development but will benefit both the City and South Boston with blue collar jobs and a broadened tax base.

Until a route is selected, an interim plan has been established which includes an intensified enforcement effort by the police which has been quite successful. Recently, District 6 police officers have tripled the number of citations issued to truck drivers for failure to follow the posted "TRUCK ROUTE" signs. Dispatchers of some of the larger trucking firms have been most cooperative in distributing "truck route" maps to their truck drivers. Also, additional new and larger "TRUCK ROUTE" signs were designed to aid truck drivers along the present route.

There are other transportation improvements that are needed for both truck and auto traffic including the Northern Avenue Bridge replacement. This State project includes the realignment of the Bridge some 200 feet south of its present location. In addition, the West Fourth Street Bridge, the Broadway Bridge, and the Dorchester Avenue Bridge, which connects South Boston to Dorchester, all require repairs.

### C. INCOMPATIBLE LAND USE

#### Issue

Due to the lack of stringent controls in the past, industrial encroachment created a band of mixed uses along First and Second Streets. Industrial and warehousing operations and the truck traffic which they generate produce the problems of safety, noise and air pollution for residents and have contributed to the deterioration and instability of adjacent residential areas. Numerous vacant lots, some with only the foundations remaining, others strewn with refuse, surround the remaining houses and creates a domino effect that results in further disinvestment and abandonment.

#### Strategy

Further land use and economic studies should focus on the ownership of the parcels involved, their possible reuse and various public and private improvements which are necessary. The BRA is currently reviewing the existing South Boston zoning boundaries and will make recommendations for future modifications to prevent further mixture of these incompatible land uses in the future. If unchecked, industrial encroachment and its resultant effects could eventually reach West Broadway, causing irreparable harm to the pre-1940 wood-frame housing stock. The City, through its policy of granting variances and conditional uses and other discretionary review powers, such as design and environmental review, should continue its policy of preventing further non-compat-

ible development in residential areas and, to the extent possible, lessen the negative impact of industry in existing mixed use areas.

#### D. VACANT AND UNDERUTILIZED LAND

##### Issue

South Boston has a large amount of vacant land and land that is greatly underutilized. The vast majority of this land (just under 300 acres) is located in the northern industrial section and includes: the South Boston Naval Annex, Boston Army Base, Penn Central, Massport properties, Anthony Athanas-Pier 4 properties, British properties, and other smaller parcels. However, vacant residential land also exists, especially in the westernmost sections. In the industrial areas the vacant and underutilized land represents a lost tax base for the city and lost job possibilities for South Boston residents. In the residential areas, the vacant lots are a blight on their neighbors, and represent potential for viable reuses, such as new one- and two-family housing, open space and recreation. Any new uses must not create new problems for the residential community.

##### Strategy

The City and Massport are currently negotiating the development of the former South Boston Naval Annex, now Boston Marine Industrial Park, consisting of 167 acres and the Boston Army Base, 50 acres, for a containerport with roll-on roll-off capability and adequate container storage. Also planned is a job training center, marine repair terminal, and a Free Trade Zone which would allow companies space to assemble products with a local labor force within the Free Trade Zone and no Federal tax would be levied until the products are shipped out of Boston. Projected uses at BMIP are expected to create some 3,000 predominantly blue collar jobs within 5 years.

Recently three parcels containing a total of 48 acres of bankrupt Penn Central Railroad Company property were placed on the market. These parcels are prime commercial properties, the only vacant land of its size and proximity to downtown Boston. Other development plans are Anthony Athanas'-Pier 4 for commercial and residential uses; expansion by Gillette, possible development of Massport's 24 acre "Commonwealth Flats" and British Properties' residential and warehousing development.

In residential areas, the City should continue the Revival and Open Space Management Programs for vacant land problems and encourage the banks to invest in housing construction and rehabilitation. The City's Revival Program is an excellent method for homeowners to buy an abutting piece of vacant property, either for increasing their yard space or for a

### **3. PROPOSED THREE YEAR IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (1978-1980) AND LONGER-RANGE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM AND OBJECTIVES**

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This section of the profile contains proposals for areas and projects for which the expenditure of public funds and often private support is recommended. These suggestions are based on the problems and strategies outlined in the previous sections of this report. It would be incorrect to look at the ideas presented in the following pages as either promises or plans but merely long range recommendations for City and neighborhood discussion.

In the recent past, City expenditure has been made up of three components: capital expenditures financed by the sale of municipal bonds to build or buy major, long-lasting facilities (such as buildings); operating expenses (salaries, paper, heat, other items consumed in their use), and Community Development Block Grants from HUD (CDBG-Federal funds for use by the City primarily for capital expenses) and Federal Public Works funding through the U.S. Department of Commerce.

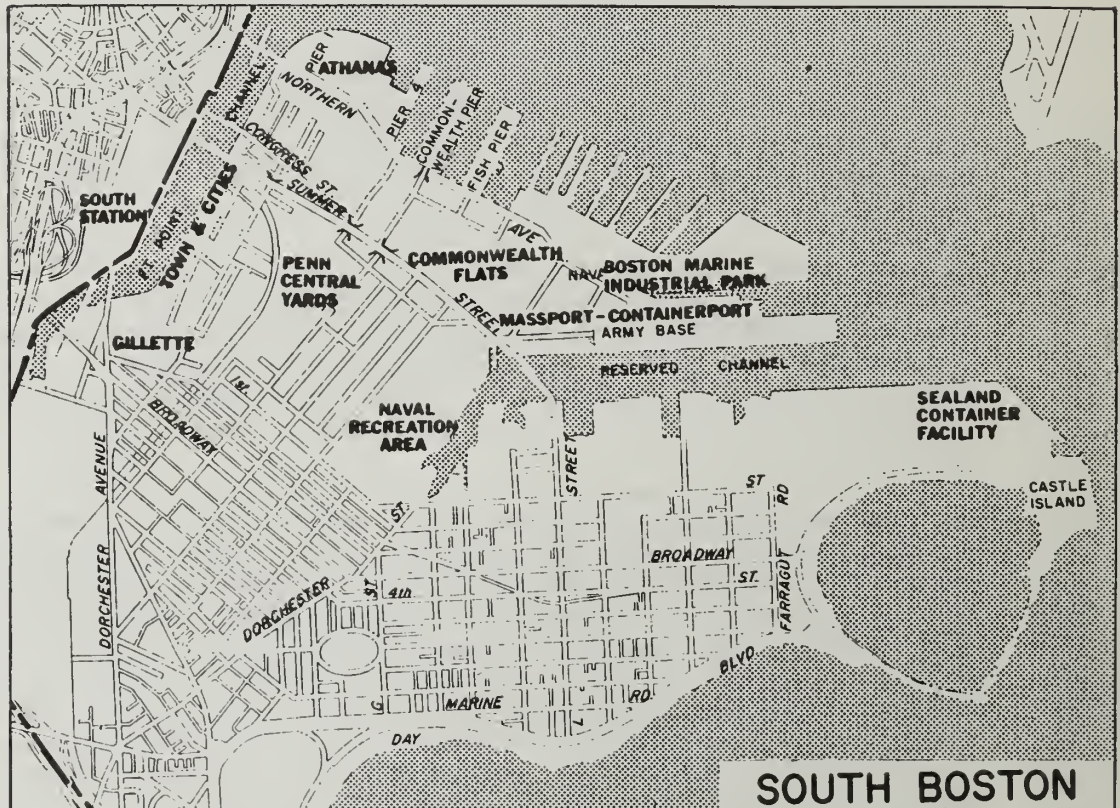
Boston's high tax rate and the current high interest rate on municipal bonds make it essential to reduce or maintain at existing levels, if possible, City funding, national appropriation levels governing the CDBG program make it very unlikely that any of these programs will appreciably increase the money available to South Boston in any of the next three years over what it has been in the last two years.

In the last two years, the City and South Boston has taken a series of steps to deal with the problems that face the community. Money has been invested in the Housing Improvement Program to help owners fix their homes, in the major commercial center to revive local pride, alleviate parking problems and create new jobs; and in a major study (still in progress) necessary for the construction of a new Seaport Access Road to remove the truck traffic from residential streets and open up areas for new tax producing uses and jobs. The Neighborhood Planning Program with this report is trying to assist the community in looking beyond the year-to-year budgeting process to at least a three year program of coordinated investment of Federal, City, and to the extent possible, State funds. Among other things, it is expected that the longer range planning process will provide more returns for the funds expended and will encourage private investment by homeowners and businessmen who will be able to have some idea what public investment they can expect to support their investment in their own property.

For example, the CDBG funds approved by the community in 1975 for the 1976 budget included \$125,000 to pay part of the cost of a required Environmental Impact Study for the proposed Seaport



garden. Lists of City owned vacant parcels eligible for this program and land auctions outside of the Revival Program will be publicized in South Boston newspapers. The new Open Space Mangement Program was specifically designed for the clearance and maintenance of city-owned vacant lots in targeted areas throughout the City. This program will provide an index of all private and city-owned public lots with information on the slope, condition, and size of the lot. In some of these areas it may be desirable for the City to hold its land until enough is amassed to be sold as a development parcel.



The City has drafted the "Boston Plan," a proposal aimed at securing federal funds to enjoin the federal government and the private sector in addressing the problems of unemployment, public housing, educational standards, health care delivery, and problems caused by crime, in four high priority neighborhoods. South Boston's "port area" is included in this plan under the Harbor section. The plan cites the development potential of vacant and underutilized parcels in South Boston. The plan would be submitted to obtain federal funds to stimulate the development process so the City and South Boston could realize new job possibilities. However, two major factors remain as key links to the development of those vacant and underutilized properties mentioned in the "Boston Plan:" (1) the Northern Avenue Bridge relocation, expected within four years and (2) the Seaport Access Road which is currently under study. The City, working with the community, should develop a land use committee for those important areas to guide future public and private actions.



Access Road. A commitment by the community to support public investment in the area now blighted by truck traffic will encourage private redevelopment of this blighted area before the new road is completed.

In keeping with the problems and strategies discussed earlier in this report, many of the 3-year recommendations deal directly or indirectly with preserving South Boston's irreplaceable housing stock and strong sense of community. Because of the rapid increase in housing losses in the western and northern sections of the town, additional attention is concentrated in these areas.

The pattern of abandoned and rundown housing indicates the major immediate problems that are contributing to the loss of housing units. These are truck traffic and inter-mixing of industrial and residential uses (as along West Second and West Third Streets), and impact of public housing projects (as along D Street and West 7th). In addition, blight can be seen feeding on itself - vacant buildings and lots threatening their neighbors with fire, vandalism, or dumping. These factors are certainly not the only ones. National and regional trends such as: unemployment, high interest rates, and skyrocketing homeowner costs have had their impact on the current situation in South Boston. But the factors listed here are the ones that can best be dealt with locally and within the constraints of the City's investment and planning programs.

The proposed South Boston Neighborhood Improvement Program (1978-1980) includes investment in: housing, Seaport Access road and related transportation problems and vacant and underutilized land to revitalize the neighborhood, to retain current residents and businesses and to attract new ones.

### Residential Stability

The City's major commitment to South Boston's neighborhood stability lies with the Housing Improvement Program as described earlier in this report, is the most effective method of protecting and improving the community's 14,000 homes and apartments.

The 1978-80 budgets for HIP should be approximately \$250,000 per year and should include a new 50% rebate program specifically geared for elderly homeowners. In selected target areas, especially in the West Broadway area where average income is lower, the 20% HIP program was combined with the new 40% program which offered a higher rebate for high cost major repairs such as roof and furnace work. This program met with limited success. The 20% program has enjoyed great success in South Boston, but if the 40% program is to succeed, a continued practice of intensive promotion and availability of HIP funds is the key. This program will serve as the biggest housing stimulant since the 1930's and strengthen South Boston's community solidarity.

In the next three years, additional money should be allocated to the "D" Street project to bring them all up to code standards and to improve maintenance and security at all three projects. Last year, a court injunction by the Boston Housing Court forced the Boston Housing Authority to make special repairs to certain projects. Today, the BHA is freed from court injunction but the limited funds restricts the BHA's ability to make project improvements.

#### Indirect Access to Industrial Operations and other Transportation Problems

The major transportation problem affecting South Boston is truck traffic using residential streets to reach the northern industrial area. These trucks have created problems of noise and air pollution, safety hazards for children, and traffic tie-ups. The key to resolving this problem and future transportation problems that could be caused by the development plans of the Naval-Army Base which will more than double the existing truck traffic on South Boston's streets lies in the construction of the Seaport Access Road. In the 1977-1980 period, additional funds, or approximately 10% of the total project cost, will have to be appropriated to pay for final engineering and design drawings for the Seaport Access Road if the neighborhood and City agree that it should be built.

Additional transportation investment is needed on the bridges that form the vital links between South Boston and the rest of the City. These include the Northern Avenue Bridge which will be replaced in two years by the State some 200 feet south of its present location; upgrading of the Broadway Bridge, the W. 4th Street Bridge, and the Dorchester Avenue Bridge linking South Boston and Dorchester.

#### Vacant and Underutilized Land

Vacant and underutilized land in South Boston, both in the northern industrial sector and in the southern residential sector can produce large numbers of jobs and broaden the tax base if developed properly. In the industrial area, notably the former South Boston Naval Annex-Army Base, a containerport with roll-on roll-off capability and adequate storage areas, a major job training center, a Free Trade Zone, marine repair service (two of the largest drydocks on the East Coast are located here) are the proposed uses. The City, through its Economic Development and Industrial Commission (EDIC), will be planning this development, anticipating the taxable revenues these properties can yield; and encouraging maximum number of jobs that can be created.

Near the shipyard are vacant Penn Central properties and other private properties along the Fort Point Channel which are also prime development candidates. The proposed "Boston Plan," contingent upon federal funds, recognizes the development poten-

tial of this area and, if adopted, will streamline the development process over the next few years and provide the necessary incentive to the private developers.

The development of this sector will benefit the region, but more importantly, help alleviate the City's and South Boston's unemployment problems. With the creation of more jobs and new uses on previously underutilized land, South Boston will become a more attractive place to live in.

In residential areas, again, the identification of all vacant land available under the City Vacant Lot Program (REVIVAL) will be made available to the public. This information could be made available, especially to owners of abutting land so that they can extend their yards or plant victory gardens. However, due to the number of lots, additional funds must be secured, and promotion of the above programs must be pushed. REVIVAL, with an annual allocation of \$20,000 coupled with the new Open Space Management Program, should have a significant impact from an aesthetic and functional point of view.

BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

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Kane Simonian, Secretary

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Roy Bishop, Director, Neighborhood Planning Program

Christopher Norton, South Boston Neighborhood Planner

## FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1977 Investment Program

ISSUE	STRATEGY	1977 INVESTMENT PROGRAM	PROPOSED 1978-1980 NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM ACTIVITIES
Residential Stability	Preservation of housing stock	H.I.P. 20% - \$160,000 (COBG) 40% - \$ 40,000 (COBG) 50% - \$ 50,000 (COBG) Elderly	Continue evaluation of impact of H.I.P. Expand H.I.P. to minimum of 300 units per year. Concentrated advertising approach.
	Rehabilitate and maintain public housing projects.	Upgrading the electrical system at Mary E. McCormack - \$250,000	Secure funds to bring "O" Street up to code. Improve maintenance and security at all three projects.
	Boarding or demolition of abandoned buildings which cannot be rehabilitated.	Boarding - \$30,000 (COBG) Demolition - \$40,000 (COBG)	Target and secure additional funds for boarding and demolition as needed.
	Open Space Management Program - Restoration, maintenance and disposition of targeted vacant lots.	\$50,000 - utilizing C.E.T.A. personnel and heavy equipment.	Expand or redraw "Lower End" target area if necessary, and secure additional funds according to need.
	Revival Program	\$20,000 (COBG)	Continue to market lots restored under the open space program to abutters.
	Capital expenditures to strengthen neighborhood and resident confidence.	Lights & sidewalks - "L" St. - \$216,000 "O" St. - \$108,000 "L" St. bathhouse - \$80,000 Residential tree planting - 350-400 trees Traffic lights & realignment of Emerson Street - \$25,000 Restore - \$20,000	Continue residential street & sidewalk improvements including trees and lights, and secure additional funds for open space and recreational facilities.
	Control land use mix & building conversions.		Variances & conditional use requests should be reviewed and modified. Review zoning & recommend appropriate changes.
	Increase availability of mortgage & home improvement money		City should meet with local banks & lending institutions to increase mortgage & home improvement money.
Indirect Access and Industrial Operations	Seaport Access Road (Study) to divert trucks from residential streets.	E.I.S. Design Review - \$125,000	Begin detailed engineering studies - Provide 10% of total construction cost. Begin construction.
	Reduce truck traffic on residential streets via signs and police enforcement.	New more visible "Truck Route" signs.	Continuous enforcement by District 6.
	Replace or repair bridges as necessary.		Repair West Fourth Street Bridge, Broadway Bridge, Dorchester Avenue Bridge; replace Northern Avenue Bridge.
Incompatible Land Use	Further economic & land use studies & an examination of current zoning boundaries and recommendations for changes.	Zoning boundary study in progress.	
Vacant and Under-utilized Land	"Boston Plan" - acquisition of federal funds to alleviate unemployment and housing problems.	Planning studies - Fort Point Channel-Penn Central area	With community input, select route alternative for Seaport Access Road to allow public and private development; replacement of Northern Avenue Bridge.
	Lists of vacant parcels eligible for City's vacant lot Revival Program should be made public where applicable, the City should develop a policy of holding vacant parcels until several are available as a development parcel.	\$10,000 - Revival Landbanking Program; reuse studies	



